



External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	Spanish
Level(s)	Intermediate 1

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published question papers and marking instructions for the examination.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

There was a drop in the number of presentations at Intermediate 1 Spanish, from 1,033 in 2012 to 1,006 in 2013. There was a sizeable rise in the proportion of S3/4 presentations, from 60% in 2012 to 74% in 2013; and a subsequent drop in S5/6 presentations, from 36% in 2012 to only 20% in 2013.

The mean marks for each component were as follows, with the marks for 2012 in brackets.

- ◆ Paper 1 Reading 19.1 out of 35 (23.9 in 2012)
- ◆ Paper 2 Listening 12.7 out of 20 (14.6 in 2012)
- ◆ Paper 3 Writing 8.5 out of 15 (9.3. in 2012)
- ◆ Speaking 24 out of 30 (25.2 last year)
- ◆ Overall 64.3% (73.0% last year)

This showed a considerable drop overall from 2012, but the marks were more in line with 2010 and 2011, when the overall mean marks were 64.1% and 65.7% respectively. Grade boundaries for 2013 were set at 49% for a C, 59% for a B, and 69% for an A. An upper A was set at 84%.

Candidate response overall was generally very good, with 41.9% of candidates achieving an A award, and over 60% a B or better. Three candidates achieved 100% in the examination. There were many excellent performances in all components of the exam.

However, at the other end, some 22% of candidates (or 223 out of 1,006) received a D or No Award. This must be of concern to some centres.

Overall, Markers thought the examination was a very balanced paper of the appropriate level for Intermediate 1. All questions were clearly worded, marking instructions were clear and worked well, and no contentious areas in the marking procedures were identified.

The two shorter Reading passages dealt with a young girl, Paula, talking about herself and her family, and a survey on study techniques. The longer passages dealt with a website giving general information about a school, and a Spanish pupil talking about his experiences at a summer course in England.

The Listening covered such areas as distances and directions, age, family, jobs and professions, nationality and countries, school subjects, time, travel, holidays, facilities and amenities, days of the week, clothes, colours, and the internet.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Reading

Most candidates attempted all questions on the paper and found it quite accessible.

Question 1, which was a 5 mark True or False box was fairly well done, as were Questions 2 and 3. A considerable number of candidates scored highly overall in the Reading paper, and more able candidates managed their time well and coped admirably with the fourth text, which was more demanding in terms of difficulty.

Listening

The paper was done fairly well, with an average mark of almost 13 out of 20. The following utterances were understood and correctly heard and translated by the majority of candidates: Question 1a *a cinco minutos* and Question 1b *Y tú, ¿de dónde eres?*; Question 2 *no vive con nosotros* OR *Trabaja como profesora en Francia*; Question 3b *es muy difícil* OR *lo hablo muy mal*; Question 4a *a las ocho y media*; Question 6a *con un gimnasio enorme, una piscina climatizada y una pista de atletismo*, although *gimnasio* was at times translated as 'gymnastics'; Question 7 *en la planta baja enfrente de la entrada*; and Question 10a *tenemos algunos problemas con la conexión a Internet* OR *Hay acceso limitado a la página web del colegio*. These were well done by almost all candidates.

Writing

There was a good response overall, and quality of language in Good and Very Good candidates showed a real attempt to go beyond minimum responses, with many outstanding performances where candidates included some complex sentences. Most candidates attempted to cover all four areas fully. There was evidence that many candidates did well in the last two sections, which often prove the most troublesome. A great variety of verbs and verb forms was demonstrated by many candidates.

Speaking

The overall performance was very high, with an average mark of 24 out of 30.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Reading

Question 1, which was a 5 mark True or False box was fairly well done but there were still candidates who confused *dieciséis* with *diecisiete*, and *mayores* with *menores*. Candidates should take great care even with supported items.

Question 2 was well done, but for some candidates insufficient detail meant that marks could not be awarded eg Question 2a *Tienes la nevera cerca*, many candidates did not put 'nearby'. Likewise in Question 2a *Puedes llamar a un amigo si necesitas ayuda* some candidates did not include 'if you need help' in their answer. Likewise in Question 2b *No hay distracciones como la television*, missing out 'like television' would mean the mark could not be awarded.

In Question 4 there was an issue with a lack of time for some candidates. In Question 4a *en un pueblo costero al sur de Inglaterra* many candidates missed out coastal/on the coast and

many left *Inglaterra* untranslated in their answer. In Question 4c *porque el inglés te abre muchas puertas a la hora de buscar trabajo* some candidates failed to understand the metaphor here. Question 4d(ii) *mi inglés mejoró también hablando con la familia en casa* proved difficult, and Question 4e(i) *En el tiempo libre fui de compras con otros estudiantes y salimos a cenar o a la bolera*, many candidates did not get two of the three activities to gain the 2 marks on offer. In Question 4e(ii) many candidates did not translate the *de otras ciudades* in *españoles de otras ciudades* and did not get the mark.

Finally in Question 4 (g) *Espero volver el año que viene*, many candidates did not know the idiom *el año que viene*. However it should be stressed that the average mark for Question 4 was still an admirable 6 out of 10.

Listening

The following questions proved to be difficult for many candidates:

- ◆ Question 3a *Mi madre es irlandesa* — many candidates translated this as ‘English’.
- ◆ Question 4b *porque puedo charlar con mis amigos*. ‘Charlar’ was not understood and often translated as ‘play’.
- ◆ Question 8b *vamos a organizar una fiesta sorpresa* — many candidates missed out the ‘surprise’ of surprise party.
- ◆ Question 9 *Queremos comprarle una camiseta azul y un CD de su grupo favorito* often the colour ‘blue’ and the ‘favourite group’ were missing from answers.
- ◆ Question 10b *el club de informática* less than half of candidates recognised ‘computing’.

There were other less common problems, with some candidates not recognising basic vocabulary such as days of the week, numbers, countries and words like *familias*, *profesores* and *alumnos*.

Writing

As ever there was a variety of levels in responses. While this paper does not vary from year to year, it is concerning that some candidates cannot cope with the four sections, and on occasions there are sections left blank or done poorly. Common errors such as ‘Mi llamo’, ‘mi gusta’, ‘en mi familia es’ abound; confusion with *ser/estar* is evident; and there is still confusion with simple verb conjugations.

Too many candidates try to fill the space under the *Instituto* heading by listing school subjects, and some candidates clearly need guidance on what constitutes three sentences. In addition, candidates must get regular practice in the format of the assessment, and good critical feedback on their attempts at it.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

As indicated earlier, there is ample evidence that centres are preparing their candidates well for the Intermediate 1 Spanish exam, and both centres and their candidates are to be complimented on this.

- ◆ Particularly for **Reading**, candidates must keep an eye on the clock, as there is a lot to cover with four passages/questions in 45 minutes. There are too many cases where candidates do not complete the paper, and some indeed barely get to tackling Question 4.
- ◆ For **Reading** and **Listening**, candidates must be aware that detailed answers are required and that quite often a one word answer will not be enough at this level.
- ◆ Detailed marking instructions for **Listening/Reading** are available on the SQA website. These show the type of detail required for answers — please share them with candidates.
- ◆ Candidates should carefully read the introductions and the key question words ‘Who’, ‘When’, ‘What’, ‘Why’ and so on. They should always be careful and take their time with supported questions, which are not always necessarily easier.
- ◆ For **Listening**, where a dictionary is not provided, candidates should learn basic vocabulary in key high frequency areas such as numbers and prices, days of the week, months and seasons, food and drink, weather expressions, school subjects and facilities, leisure and sport, colours, clothes, jobs, places in town, common adjectives, prepositions and question words.
- ◆ Please stress to candidates that in **Reading** and **Listening** they are not allowed to give alternative answers, for example by using brackets or an oblique. If one of the answers is incorrect, they will lose the mark, even if the other one is correct.
- ◆ In **Writing**, especially given that the task has been prepared in advance and never varies, candidates should only use the dictionary to check on the spelling of words, and should not use it to make up new sentences, which would only lead to mistranslation, other tongue interference and poor word order at this level.
- ◆ Less able candidates should limit themselves to only three sentences for each area, and should keep these short and uncomplicated.
- ◆ Candidates in general should aim above all for accuracy in verbs and other parts of speech, such as gender of nouns, adjectival agreement, cases and singular and plural agreements and also the use of accents.

General

- ◆ Candidates should read over all their answers to ensure that they make sense and that their English expression is clear. When writing in Spanish, they should again make sure that they thoroughly check over their work for **accents, spelling and grammatical accuracy**. Likewise, they should always try to present their work as neatly as possible.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2012	1033
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	1006
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Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 100				
A	41.9%	41.9%	422	69
B	18.9%	60.8%	190	59
C	17.0%	77.8%	171	49
D	6.2%	84.0%	62	44
No award	16.0%	100.0%	161	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related, as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.